

Message Text

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ACTION PM-05

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 20139

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

EO 11652:GDS
TAGS: MASS, MILI, TH
SUBJ: RTAF AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT PLANS

REF: A. BANGKOK 17335, B. STATE 167848

1. RTAF HAS NOW FORMALLY TOLD JUSMAG THAT IT IS NOT INTERESTED IN BUYING F-8'S. DECISION BASED ON RTAF VIEW THAT F-8 DOES NOT FIT INTO THE FUTURE FORCE STRUCTURE.

2. MORE GENERALLY, RTAF IS NOW ENGAGED IN HIGH-LEVEL ASSESSMENT OF ITS FUTURE FORCE STRUCTURE WHICH SHOULD BE COMPLETED IN THE NEAR FUTURE. ASSESSMENT IS IN PART RESULT OF CONCERN OVER THE VARIOUS DIRECTIONS RTAF PROCUREMENT SEEMS TO BE GOING.

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Z 3. WE HOPE TO HAVE A READOUT ON WHAT WILL BE DETERMINED IN THE NEXT WEEK OR TWO. HOWEVER, THERE FOLLOWS A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY WITH REGARD TO F-5E'S, THE AEROMACCHI AIRCRAFT, F-16, AND POSSIBLE RENEWED RTAF INTEREST IN THE A-37.

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4. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE CONSIDERATION OF AEROMACCHI MB-326K HAD BEEN WELL ADVANCED. MILITARY RATIONALE WAS THAT RTAF NEEDED AN EARLY REPLACEMENT FOR THE AGEING T-28 AS MATTER OF HIGHEST PRIORITY. WHILE AEROMACCHI MB-326K REMAINS THE FRONT RUNNER, SERIOUS QUESTIONS HAVE NOW BEEN RAISED WITH REGARD TO ITS UTILITY AND RTAF IS REASSESSING THE SITUATION INCLUDING A REAPPRAISAL OF THE A-37.

5. WITH REGARD TO AEROMACCHI, CONCERN IS BEING EXPRESSED IN SOME RTAF CIRCLES ABOUT LOGISTICS PROBLEMS CAUSED BY A NEW TYPE OF AIRCRAFT (THE A-37 ALREADY IS IN THE INVENTORY). QUESTIONS ARE NOW BEING RAISED ON THE COST OF AMMUNITION FOR AEROMACCHI WHICH USES 30 MM CANNON AT DOLS 50 A ROUND. ALSO TECHNICAL QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN RAISED WITH REGARD TO THE SHORT TIME BETWEEN OVERHAULS FOR THE AEROMACCHI ENGINE AS WELL AS SOME CONCERN WITH THE STRUCTURAL LIFE OF THE AIRCRAFT. HOWEVER, SUPPORTERS OF OF CURRENT DELIBERATIONS IS A POSTPONEMENT OF FINAL DECISION ON WHAT AIRCRAFT TO PROCURE FOR GROUND SUPPORT.

6. DECISION WITH REGARD TO PROCUREMENT OF GROUND SUPPORT AIRCRAFT DOES IMPINGE BUDGETARILY ON ANY RTG DECISION WITH REGARD TO F-5E PROCUREMENT. HOWEVER, THE F-5E SECOND SQUADRON IS BEING PROGRAMMED MILITARILY AS AN AIR DEFENSE WEAPON, WITH A SECONDARY AIR TO GROUND ROLE. IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT RTAF INTENDS TO DEFER FOR THE NEAR FUTURE AT LEAST ANY DECISION WITH REGARD TO PROCUREMENT OF ITS SECOND F-5E SQUADRON. THEY APPARENTLY VIEW THEIR INTENDED PROCUREMENT OF FOUR ADDITIONAL F-5E AIRCRAFT (BANGKOK 17335) AS SUFFICIENT TO MEET THEIR NEAR TERM NEEDS. CONSEQUENTLY, WE EXPECT NO EARLY FORMAL RTAF REACTION TO P & B INFORMATION WHICH WE HAVE PROVIDED. AT SAME TIME WE DO EXPECT SENIOR THAI MILITARY OFFICIALS TO CONTINUE CONFIDENTIAL

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TO RAISE SECOND F-5E SQUADRON INFORMALLY IN CONTEXT OF NEED FOR ADDITIONAL FMS.

7. ADDITIONAL FACTOR WHICH WEIGHS ON RTAF ON MAKING CURRENT BUDGETARY DECISION RELATES TO F-16 QUESTION. RTAF DOES WANT MODERN HIGH PERFORMANCE AIRCRAFT. DETERMINATION TO PROCURE SUCH AIRCRAFT IS EXPRESSED STRONGLY AT ALL LEVELS. THIS MEANS RTAF WILL HAVE TO DEFER FINAL DECISIONS ON SOME MAJOR PROCUREMENT ITEMS TO PRESERVE FUNDS FOR EITHER EVENTUAL F-16 PURCHASE OR POSSIBLY THIRD COUNTRY PROCUREMENT OF ADVANCED AIRCRAFT. RTAF WANTS F-16 BADLY AND WILL NOT LIKELY ABANDON ITS EFFORTS TO GET OUR APPROVAL DESPITE OUR NEGATIVE STANCE.

8. AS NOTED ABOVE WE WILL HAVE A BETTER FEELING FOR AT LEAST CURRENT RTAF THINKING IN NEAR FUTURE BUT HOPE ABOVE IS HELPFUL TO WASHINGTON AGENCIES. O'DONOHUE

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